



Political education for organisation-building

When the Communist University began to do systematic political education in the Johannesburg Central Branch of the SACP, and in the Onica Mashego Branch of the ANC, from 2003, it felt a need for a statement of the purposes of such political education.

What were we trying to achieve? What were our goals? These were the first questions on our minds.

A document was produced. It has been edited many times since then. The most recent version (updated in 2009) is attached.

In the first paragraph it says:

“The main purpose of political education is to prepare cadres who can do the work of the organisation. As soon as a leadership is formed it begins to deplete, because comrades are deployed to higher structures. Others move away. For these reasons the branch needs to generate a steady stream of new cadres who are ready to take up the leadership and administration of the branch.”

The Communist University has grown, to the point that this Induction course was the fourteenth full ten-week study-circle course to be prepared, out of a (now) full complement of sixteen. Other formats have also been developed, notably the successful half-day school format.

The CU has produced, as one of its sixteen standard courses, an entire ten-week course on Education and its place in society, including revolutionary pedagogical theory.

As we have already discovered in this Induction course, study is the only source and basis of the Communist Party’s vanguard role in relation to the working class, and to society as a whole.

Replenishing the cadre

So that, whereas other purposes than *“preparing cadres who can do the work of the organisation”* were already being described in the attached document, yet in this Induction course, it remains most necessary to problematise the matter that was at the front of our minds in the Communist University, at its beginning.

This was the production, and reproduction, of cadres of the Party and of the ANC, not only in theoretical, but also in practical terms.

It remains as true now as it was then, that the cadre force at Branch level begins to deplete as soon as it forms, necessitating the constant recruitment and improvement of new members, to the level of cadreship.

Decade of the Cadre

What exactly is a cadre? This is a good question for discussion, especially now that the ANC has, at its 53rd National Conference at Mangaung, announced the Decade of the Cadre.

One of the answers could be that a *cadre* (in the French-language meaning of the word) is literally a ruler (straight-edge), or a frame. The human framework that holds up an organisation and gives it shape, is the cadre. In that sense the cadre is a collective noun, meaning a number of people together, forming the framework, or structure.

In South Africa, a cadre may be, and usually is, understood to refer to an individual. Such a cadre is a person who is fully equipped to operate independently and to extend the organisation wherever he or she finds herself.

Both of these definitions are useful, and they do not contradict each other.

Agenda of the cadre

In those days we said *“the branch needs to generate a steady stream of new cadres who are ready to take up the leadership and administration of the branch.”* We made a distinction between leadership, and administration. The first is the domain of politics, while the second is also political, but it has more to do with organisation – the conscious creation of structure – as a practical task.

Hence at last we were bound to return to the details of administration of the kinds that are being dealt with in this Induction course. Cadres must be able to reproduce and expand the organisation, and to expand organisation in general. They must know how it works, very practically.

After Induction, in our CU series, comes another course called Agitprop. The word stands for “Agitational Propaganda”. It will include writing, media relations, campaigning, rallies, graphic design and layout, of posters, flyers and other materials; and many other things. Some of the things that you would like to be inducted in, may be more thoroughly dealt with under Agitprop.

- The above is to introduce an original reading-text: [Political Education, Communist University, c. 2005](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).